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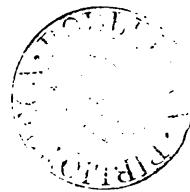
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48.1649.

AN ABRIDGED
ENGLISH VERSION
OF
SOPHOCLES'
ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS;
WRITTEN AND ADAPTED FOR
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
Queen Victoria;
AND
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS,
Prince Albert;
BY
WILLIAM BARTHOLOMEW,
TO THE MUSIC OF
FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY.

*First performed in England at Buckingham Palace,
February 10, 1848.*



PERSONS.

ŒDIPUS, the banished King of Thebes.

POLYNICES, his eldest Son.

CREON.

THESEUS, *King of Athens.*

A CITIZEN OF COLONOS.

A MESSENGER.

CHORUS. *Aged Citizens of Colonos.*

The Action occurs at the entrance of the Grove of the Furies;
near Athens.

ŒDIPUS AT COLONOS.

Enter ŒDIPUS led by ANTIGONE.

ŒDIPUS.

Where are we now, Antigone ? look round,
See for thy dark old sire, if any here
Will yield an alms to soothe the desolate,
Forsaken, wandering outcast, Œdipus !
Few are my wants, and little will suffice them ;
For years of woe have taught my soul to bear
Calamity with resignation. Find me,
My child, some hallowed, or unhallowed seat,
Where I may rest my aged tottering limbs,
Till some one passing, tell us where we wait
To learn and do the rites that custom claims.

ANTIGONE.

Dear and long-suffering father ! distant appears
A noble city crowned with lofty towers :
And here, a stately grove of laurels, bays,
And olives twined with vines ; where fluttering quires
Of nightingales turn silence into song.
Come, sit on this unhewn fragment : for one,
So old and wayworn, surely needs repose.

ŒDIPUS.

Gently ! remember I am blind.

ANTIGONE.

I do :

Alas ! thy helplessness too oft reminds me.

ŒDIPUS.

But where are we ?

ANTIGONE.

I judge, near Athens.

ŒDIPUS.

Go and inquire.

ANTIGONE.

For this, I need not leave thee : here cometh one
Who may perchance, inform us.

Enter a COLONEAN.

ŒDIPUS.

Friend ; I learn
From her through whom I see, that I may ask—

COLONEAN.

Not where thou sittest ; for thy feet profane
A sacred spot.

ŒDIPUS.

Sacred ! to whom ?

COLONEAN.

The dread
Stern Goddesses who sprang from Earth and Chaos.

ŒDIPUS.

I would invoke them by their names in prayer.

COLONEAN.

The prescient Eumenidæ we call them ;
Though others worship them by other titles.

ŒDIPUS.

O, may they heed my humble supplication !—
Then will their sacred haunt henceforth be mine.

COLONEAN.

What words are these ?

ŒDIPUS.

Omens of destiny.

COLONEAN.

If so ; I dare not urge thee hence, but by
Our city's mandate.

ŒDIPUS.

Oh, seek it not : but deign
To aid a wandering exile's prayer !

COLONEAN.

What wouldest thou ?

ŒDIPUS.

Say, where am I ?

COLONEAN.

This hill equestrian,
Crowneth the brazen way that guardeth Athens.
Majestic Neptune, with Prometheus
The Titan—he who brought celestial fire
To earth,—here sanctify the spot. Its plains
Around, and people, are Colonean.

ŒDIPUS.

Who governs them ?

COLONEAN.

Great Theseus, the heir
Of Ægeus, now is king.

ŒDIPUS.

Would any here
Entreat him hither ?

COLONEAN.

To what intent ? explain.

ŒDIPUS.

His aiding me, may prove great gain to him..

COLONEAN.

How so ? through thee, whose eyes are dark ?

ŒDIPUS.

My words
Are all perceptive.

COLONEAN.

Err not through blind conceit.

Yet, noble bearing dignifies thy garb ;
And Fortune may have wronged thee : so remain,
Till I return with tidings for thy guidance.

Exit COLONEAN.

ŒDIPUS.

Child ; is he gone ?

ANTIGONE.

We are again alone.

ŒDIPUS.

Ye Deities revered, within whose grove,
My weary limbs repose ; be gracious now
To me, and Phœbus,—who by oracle
Foretold the sequent woes that bring me here
To end a life, that brandeth them with shame,
Who cast me forth to roam ; and crowneth them
Who may protect and shelter me, with glory.
Signs, he declared should be displayed in peals
And flashes from above, shaking the earth,
As harbingers of my approaching end.
Nor doubt I the event ; since hither led,
Pure and unstained by wine—which you abhor,—
I rest now on this fragment unprofaned
By human craft. Deign then, ye Goddesses,
To turn Apollo's prescient words to deeds ;
And end a life of woes,—unless it be
My fate to suffer others ere I die !

ANTIGONE.

Cease ; for a group of aged men approach,—
Perchance, to gaze on thee.

ŒDIPUS.

If so ; remove me.

Secluded in the grove, we there may learn
New motives for discretion.

They retire within the grove.

Enter Chorus.

STROPHE 1.

CHORUS.

Behold !

He is gone ! seek him, search,
 Find the intruder that here profanely tarried ;
 The bold, impious, shameless man !
 Look round on every side,
 Inquiring, call aloud !
 Some wandering wretch
 Hither is lurking :
 None but a stranger would venture here,
 Thus provoking their dreadful ire,
 Their's—the maidens who haunt this grove,
 Their's—whom we fear to name.
 Awe-stricken, we with eyes averted,
 On, in silent devotion, pass ;
 Scarcely voicing the prayer we breathe.
 We now learn that a man here cometh,
 Of our laws regardless :
 We pry into all the recesses around,
 To discover him :
 But alas, our search is eluded !

ŒDIPUS and ANTIGONE appear.

ŒDIPUS.

See him here ! I perceive by your words,
 Ye are seeking for me.

CHORUS.

Alas, alas !

His voice and his aspect fill me with dread !

ŒDIPUS.

Do not deem me a scorner of you, or your laws.

CHORUS.

Who, all-aiding Jove, is this aged man ?

ŒDIPUS.

Not one by Fortune befriended, believe ;
 Or I never had crept here dependantly blind,
 A burthensome load on the slender and weak.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

CHORUS.

O say ;
 Without sight wert thou born ;
 Hast thou from childhood thus wretchedly existed,
 Growing aged, as I surmise ?
 Without delay, come down ;
 Or curse will fall on curse !
 Thy steps are profane !
 Go not within the silent retreat ;
 From the verdant grove retire ;
 Where, from the sacred vase
 Pure oblations of honey flow
 Blent with the limpid stream.
 Therefore, beware, unhappy stranger :
 Hence remove from that awful place ;
 Yet, no nearer approach to us :—
 Hear'st thou, wandering wretched outcast ?
 Quit its holy verge, and
 Stand on a spot where thou may'st safely remain
 And freely converse.
 There speak, and we then may befriend thee.

ŒDIPUS.

What shall we answer, or do, my child ?

ANTIGONE.

Unreluctantly yield them obedience.

ŒDIPUS.

Well ; lead and sustain me.

ANTIGONE.

I am holding thee now.

ŒDIPUS.

O strangers ! I trust you will do me no wrong,
When I have removed from this hallowed retreat.

STROPHE 2.

CHORUS.

Thou'rt safe, aged man; no hostile array
Shall by force assail, or dislodge thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Yet still further on ?

CHORUS.

Still further.

ŒDIPUS.

Here ?

CHORUS.

Lead him fair maiden, onward ;
For thou canst perceive the way.

ANTIGONE.

Still follow, still follow, fearlessly treading ;
Remember, thy daughter leads thee.

CHORUS.

Stranger ; here in a foreign land,—
As unhappily thou art now ;
Refrain from all its laws forbid ;
And honour all they honour.

ŒDIPUS.

Child ; still lead me on,
Where devotional usage allows us to go ;
Yet where we may hear them and answer in turn ;
For we come to obey—not oppose Fate.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

CHORUS.

There stand, and move not beyond the bound ;
Nor step o'er the verge of the terrace.

ŒDIPUS.

On this place ?

CHORUS.

Enough.

ŒDIPUS.

And shall I

Remain here ?

CHORUS.

Go further sideward,

And rest on that unhewn stone.

ANTIGONE.

Still let me guide thee, my father :—gently !

Come after me step by step.

ŒDIPUS.

Alas, woe me !

ANTIGONE.

Remember, father, thy daughter's arm

Still sustaineth and guideth thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Ah, I am truly helpless !

CHORUS.

Now inform us, unhappy man,

Who of mortals art thou ? reply,

Poor sightless roamer ; name thy home ;

Say from what land thou comest ?

ŒDIPUS.

Ask me not,

O strangers ; I have no home !

CHORUS.

And why wilt thou not answer us ?

ŒDIPUS.

O do not question me, I pray ;

Urge me no further ; I cannot tell ye !

CHORUS.

Yet wherefore ?

ŒDIPUS.

My birth is my shame !

CHORUS.

Speak !

ŒDIPUS.

What, my daughter, shall I answer ?

CHORUS.

Let us hear, stranger, the name
Of thy sire ? freely reply !

ŒDIPUS.

Ah me ! my child, shall I tell them truly ?

ANTIGONE.

Speak frankly, and hide nothing from them.

ŒDIPUS.

Since no evasion can aid us—*must* I speak ?

CHORUS.

Why hesitate ? quickly inform us !

ŒDIPUS.

Heard ye of Laius ?

CHORUS.

Ha ; that woeful name !

ŒDIPUS.

The descendant of Labdacus ?

CHORUS.

O, Jove !

ŒDIPUS.

Œdipus, haplessly born ?

CHORUS.

Art thou the man ?

ŒDIPUS.

Do not shrink, be not appalled !

CHORUS.

Woe, woe !

ŒDIPUS.

I am that sufferer !

CHORUS.

Woe !

ŒDIPUS.

What now, dear child, will befall us ?

CHORUS.

Hence hasten away ; go far from this land !

ŒDIPUS.

Is this your promised protection ?

CHORUS.

None are obnoxious to Fate, when an injury
Thus, by repelling, recoils. By deceiving,
Men overmatch the deceiver ; and craftily
Hurl on the guilty head, evil intended.

This instant depart, nor henceforth intrude ; quickly
Get thee away, let us see thee no longer : go,
Go with the fatal curse
Thou hangest o'er Colonos !

ANTIGONE.

Strangers ! If nature in your virtuous breasts,
Recoil with horror from my blind old sire ;
Whose deeds—if crimes, were unpremeditated ;
At least, take pity on his poor sad child,
Pleading to fathers in a father's cause,
With eyes—not like his, senseless ! Revere his age !
Display the godlike attribute of mercy !
Do ! I entreat you by your ties most dear ;—
Your children, wives, your cherish'd hopes of heaven ;
And by that certain Fate which none can shun !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Poor child of Œdipus ! we pity his,
And thy distress : yet, urged by holy fear,
We dare not alter what we have decreed.

ŒDIPUS.

By the dread Powers, from whose retreat ye drew me ;
Spurn not indignantly this care-worn frame ;
Which hither comes—though broken down by woes,
Hallowed with blessings for the state of Athens ;—

Blessings, which you shall know when Theseus comes.
Till then, respect my person, and your promise !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Reasons not lightly urged, command respect :
What thine import, our Ruler must decide.

ANTIGONE.

Oh Jove ! what can I say,—or think ?

CEDIPUS.

Why thus ?

How now, Antigone ?

ANTIGONE.

Yonder, there cometh
A woman on a fleet Sicilian steed :
A broad Thessalian bonnet shades her face—
Is it, or not ?—are sight and sense deceived ;
Doubting although assured ? yes, it is she !
She smilingly salutes me ; 'tis Ismene !

Enter ISMENE.

ISMENE.

Father and sister !—Oh the joy to find you !—
Yet with what sorrow I behold you thus !

CEDIPUS.

Alas, my child ! why comest thou ?

ISMENE.

I come

To bring you weighty tidings.

CEDIPUS.

But my sons,—

Thy brothers; wherefore came they not ? where are they ?

ISMENE.

Where fatal discord and disorder reign !

CEDIPUS.

What ! do they dwell at home, like men of Egypt,
Who ply the loom, while women plough the loam ?
Else wherefore let their tender sisters roam

To soothe the sorrows of their aged sire ;
 Enduring in their stead, the angry storms
 That harass him ? She,—shame to them ! hath been
 From childhood until now, my constant guide,
 And sharer of my woes ; sustaining me,
 And with me wandering, footworn and foodless,
 Through rugged barren wilds, chill'd by bleak winds,
 And scorch'd by arid beams ; forego ing for
 My sake, the comforts of a plenteous home.
 And thou too, who didst boldly plead my cause,
 Ere they ejected me to stray an outcast ;
 Must have a weighty motive, here to seek me
 So far away from Thebes : much I fear,
 Thy tidings are momentous and alarming.

ISMENE.

To speak of all the hardships I have borne
 While seeking you, would be to suffer them
 Again. The tale of extant strife between
 Your two unhappy sons, is grief enough
 For me to mention, and for you to hear.
 They first, resolved to yield the throne to Creon ;
 Hoping the curse that hovers o'er our house,
 Would, by their resignation, be averted.
 But now, inspired by some dread God, each strives
 To make the Theban sceptre's power his own.
 The youngest born usurps the elder's right :
 And Polynices, from his country thrust,
 Flies to the vales of Argos ; whence, allied
 By marriage with the daughter of her king,
 He hastens, aided by the Argive hosts,
 To triumph on the Cadmean plains, or fall.
 These are not vague reports, but fearful facts.
 Oh, that I knew as surely, when the Gods,
 In pity would alleviate your woes !

CEDIPUS.

What hope hast thou, the Gods will deign to aid me ?

ISMENE.

Inspired by recent Oracles, I hope.

ŒDIPUS.

What have they uttered that concerneth me ?

ISMENE.

They say : the day draws near ; when thou, alive,
Or dead, for Thebes' safety wilt be needed.

ŒDIPUS.

Can Œdipus when dead, be powerful ?

ISMENE.

He will : and Creon by this prophecy induced,
Is hastening here for you.

ŒDIPUS.

With what intent ?

ISMENE.

To place you on the borders of the city
You may not enter.

ŒDIPUS.

Excluded from its gates,

Can I aid Thebes ?

ISMENE.

If elsewhere retained ;
Disgrace and ruin hover o'er her State.

ŒDIPUS.

Lips not oracular, might utter this.

ISMENE.

Yet therefore, would the Thebans have your person.

ŒDIPUS.

Entombed in Thebes ?

ISMENE.

That, your father's blood
Forbids.

ŒDIPUS.

They never—never shall possess me !

ISMENE.

Then heavy woes will fall on Cadmus' sons.

ŒDIPUS.

Wherefore, my child ?

ISMENE.

I know not : but thus said

The Oracle.

ŒDIPUS.

And have my sons both heard it ?

ISMENE.

They have.

ŒDIPUS.

And yet, unheeding me, they grasp
The regal power !

ISMENE.

With grief, I know, and say it.

ŒDIPUS.

Ye Gods ! increase their fiery fatal strife ;
 And make the issue of the war they wage,
 Spear against spear in either's bosom plunged !
 Sons, who had power to aid me, might by a word
 Have nullified the mandate that condemn'd
 Their sire to wander begging, or to starve !—
 And starve I should, but for these tender girls,
 Whose abject father still is dear to them
 As when his brow was pinnacled with gold.
 Not so these vipers who affect the throne ;
 Which they, with my consent, shall never mount !
 This, Phœbus long ago declared to me ;
 And still, by what I now have heard, confirms.
 Let Creon come with all the Theban rulers,
 They shall not draw me hence ! Strangers ; if you
 Will deign to guard me ; blessings shall descend
 On you and your's ; disasters, on my foes !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

You and your daughters merit our compassion.
 Yet, coming here to bless us, you must now
 Propitiate the stern Divinities,
 Whose holy grove your feet have violated.

ŒDIPUS.

Say, by what rites ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

With hands made clean, procure
 Libations from the streamlet : near its source,
 Are double-handled urns, which must be crowned.

ŒDIPUS.

With boughs, or wool ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

With wool, from lambs new shorn.

ŒDIPUS.

And then ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Turn to the orient, and pour
 Three pure libations forth ;—thrice drain the urn.

ŒDIPUS.

Of what ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Water and honey mingled ; free from wine.

ŒDIPUS.

And having laved the verdant earth—

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Then, place
 Fresh olive boughs,—thrice three times three, therein ;
 And clasping both your hands, bow down and pray.

ŒDIPUS.

Tell me what form of words may prove availing ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Address them as—Benevolent Divinities ;
 Imploring humbly their propitious aid.

Or, if another supplicate for you,
 The invocation should be murmured briefly.
 Then let the pleader slowly back retire :
 And you may hope for aid from them and us.

ŒDIPUS.

Ye understand, my children ?

ISMENE.

We do; dear father.

ŒDIPUS.

Feeble and blind ; these double woes preclude me
 From doing, save by you, what must be done.
 Go then, without delay perform the rites :—
 Yet one of you must stay to aid me here,
 And guide my feeble steps ; or I shall fall.

ISMENE.

I go. Direct where I may find the place,
 And what may else be needed ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

There is one
 Dwelling within the grove, will furnish all.

ISMENE.

I hasten thither. Antigone, remain
 Here with our father.

Exit ISMENE.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Now stranger ; from the city,
 Theseus our king, the son of Ægeus comes.

Enter THESEUS.

THESEUS.

From many, I have heard in former days,
 The woeful deeds that caused thy loss of sight.
 And Laius' son described as here I came ;
 That wretched garb and gloomy brow denote
 Thou art the man. Unhappy Œdipus !
 In pity I would learn what thou wouldest have,—

Thou and that poor lorn maiden by thy side,
 From me and from my people. Fearless speak ;
 And danger shall not damp my will to aid thee :
 For I have been a stranger, and have known
 A stranger's sorrows in a foreign land :
 And therefore, never will I spurn the prayer
 Of misery. Like thee, I am a man ;
 And cannot say my sun will shine to-morrow.

ŒDIPUS.

Thy virtue, Theseus, shineth in thy words.
 And as thou knowest my woeful history ;
 It but remains for me to offer thee
 This wither'd frame ; which though no sightly boon,
 Is fraught with blessings beauty cannot yield.

THESEUS.

In what respect ?

ŒDIPUS.

That, future time will show.

THESEUS.

When shall thy goodly words be verified ?

ŒDIPUS.

When I am dead, and thou hast buried me.

THESEUS.

Is all that intervenes 'twixt now and then,
 Remembered not ; or matter of no moment ?

ŒDIPUS.

My worth, alive or dead, is in myself.

THESEUS.

The favour sought, is trivial indeed.

ŒDIPUS.

Yet how important will the crisis prove to thee,
 And all who would compel me back to Thebes !

THESEUS.

And why not go ; rather than wander thus ?

ŒDIPUS.

They banished me!—as one who by design
Had slain his father: and this excludes me from
My fatherland.

THESEUS.

Exclude, yet urge thee back!

ŒDIPUS.

Heaven's oracles affright them.

THESEUS.

Threatening ills?

ŒDIPUS.

Aye; ills from thee and thine in future strife.

THESEUS.

But why should strife arise between our States?

ŒDIPUS.

Athens and Thebes linked in love to-day;
May grapple hostile ere to-morrow's dawn:
A cause, though trivial, soon or late will rise.
Then shall my ashes reek with Theban blood:
And this, foretold, shall be; if Jove be Jove;
And Phœbus, Jove's prophetic son. Enough:
What heaven decrees, is best revealed by heaven.
Only be true to me; and Time will prove
My worth to thee,—unless the Gods deceive me.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

In other words he said before, what now
Our monarch hears.

THESEUS.

Wilt thou then, Œdipus,

Abide with me?

ŒDIPUS.

That, Fate forbids. My bourne is here!

THESEUS.

For what?

ŒDIPUS.

To die triumphant o'er my banishers!
Who now approach to force me hence.

THESEUS.

Fear not !

Let them who menace thee attempt the deed ;
 And they shall find they stem a foundering sea.
 If Phœbus guided, he will guard thee here :
 And though I be not near thee, still my name
 Will shield thee and repel assailing foes.

Exit THESEUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE 1.

Thou comest to the land, O friend ;
 Fam'd for fleet-footed steeds, and blooming meadows :
 Thou standest in Colonos' grove,
 Where the voices of nightingales
 Resound, floating in dulcet strains
 Through their temples of verdure ;—
 Where the thick-woven ivy clings,
 Spreading over the sacred aisles ;—
 Where, in security ripens the fruitful vine,
 Unscath'd by beams or stormwinds.
 And here roameth the joyous God
 Bountiful Dionysus, ever greeted
 In chorus by the Nymphs who rear'd him.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

Fair and fragrant at dawn of day,
 See the beautiful heaven-bedewed Narcissus,—
 The flower that shone in the verdant crowns
 Worn of old by the Goddesses.
 See the Crocus arrayed in gold :
 Hear the slumberless waters
 While they glide in Cephissus' tide,
 Still meandering day by day
 Over the plains, bearing unsullied waves along,
 Enriching all the bowers
 Embosom'd in the favoured land,
 Which the choir of the Muses never spurned ;
 Nor Cythera, whose reins are golden.

STROPHE 2.

Here too, bloometh a tree strange to the rich regions of Asia ;
 Nor in Dorian plains doth it appear,
 Gracing the isle where mighty Pelops
 Held sway : alone here, it freely springeth,
 Revered and feared by all our foes ;
 In native splendour it blooms for Athens :
 Behold, our's is the rich oil-dropping Olive !
 Aged and youthful, noble and peasant,
 Never wantonly harm this holy tree :
 Guarded and cherish'd it stands secure,
 Ever heeded by Morian Jove ;—
 Loved by blue-eyed Minerva.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

Yet still, let me extol heaven's richest gifts deigned to my country,
 Presented by the Sea-god to our State ;
 Sources of wealth, honour, and glory ;—
 Our land and sea-steeds, rein and rudder-guided.
 O Chronos' son, by these, we stand
 Pre-eminent ! Mighty God Poseidon,
 Thou didst give us the bridle for the courser ;
 Guided, or curbed, he yields obedience :
 Through the billows we dash, stemming the deep,
 Speeded along by the oar and helm,
 Bounding on with the dancing Nymphs,
 Nereus' hundred-footed daughters !

ANTIGONE.

Now glorious land ; transcend your praise by deeds !

ŒDIPUS.

Why thus, my daughter ?

ANTIGONE.

Yonder, Creon comes

With armed men !

ŒDIPUS.

O Sages, aid ! protect me !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Fear not ! confide in us !

Enter CREON, Soldiers following.

CREON.

Heirs of the land,—

Your looks betoken fear ! yet fear me not ;
 Nor frowning chide an aged friend, who comes
 To woo—not force the mightiest State of Greece :
 In pity for this poor old suffering man
 Endeared to me by kindred ties, I bring
 The invitation—not of one, but all
 Our Thebans to afflicted Œdipus.

(To Œdipus.) The State recalls thee. It were base in me,
 Beholding thee thus broken down by woes,
 A wandering stranger destitute and blind ;
 Did I not now advise thee to return,—
 Thee, and thy one poor guide ; and she—alas,
 Thy daughter ! Ah, wretched maiden ; I never dreamt
 To see thee roofless, begging, unprotected,
 Obnoxious to the scorn of lawless lust !
 I blush with shame, that every stranger knows
 These woeful truths that brand—not *thee* so much
 As *me*,—unhappy me and all our kindred !
 If these persuasions fail ; then, by the Gods,
 I do conjure thee, Œdipus, return !

ŒDIPUS.

O, base audacious man ! skill'd in the craft
 Of clothing falsehood in the guise of truth ;
 Tell me ; who cast me forth to roam, but *you* ?
You banished me !—Was this a kinsman's love ?
 Now, seeing me protected by this State,
 You come with honied words to lure, or failing,
 To drag me hence by force :—not to a home,
 But to your boundaries, that I may avert

The future vengeance of this land. Avaunt !
Here my avenging spirit shall abide.

CREON.

Seeing, O gentle strangers, how he rejects
 Persuasion ; should I not force compliance ?

ŒDIPUS.

Who dare enforce it while these friends protect me ?

CREON.

Though they protect thee, I will rack thy heart !

ŒDIPUS.

What means this menace ?

CREON.

I have seized Ismene.

ŒDIPUS.

What woes are mine !

CREON.

Still heavier await thee.

ŒDIPUS.

Where is Ismene ?

CREON.

Where Antigone

Shall go.

ŒDIPUS.

What will ye do, my friends ? forsake me ;
 Or chase this vile man hence ?

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Stranger, begone !

Add not this wrong to that which thou hast done.

CREON, (*To his Guard.*)

Take her away,—by force if she resist !

ANTIGONE.

Where shall I fly ? aid me ! save me, ye Gods !
 Shelter me, O men !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Stranger, what deed is this ?

CREON.

I touch not *him* ; but *she* belongs to me.

ŒDIPUS.

Patricians !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Tell me ; can this be just ?

CREON.

'Tis just !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Well ; prove it just.

CREON.

I take my own.

STROPHE.

ŒDIPUS.

O, mighty State !

CHORUS.

O stranger ; desist, desist ! quickly go ;
Go, or we force thee hence !

CREON.

Stand back !

CHORUS.

Not from thee. Strive not to do this deed !

CREON.

Assail me not, lest ye provoke my guards.

ŒDIPUS.

This conduct I foretold !

CHORUS.

Go from the maiden,

We command thee !

CREON.

Command them who serve ye !

CHORUS.

Leave her, we charge thee !

CREON.

Leave me, I charge ye !

CHORUS.

Ye freemen, arise ! O come, quickly come !
 Foes here assail our land ; aid us without delay !
 O come, quickly come !

ANTIGONE.

They tear me from him ! help me, help me, friends !

ŒDIPUS.

Where art thou, dearest ?

ANTIGONE.

Torn from thee by force !

ŒDIPUS.

Give me thy hand !

ANTIGONE.

Alas, I cannot move !

CREON.

Guards ; bear her hence !

Exeunt Guards with ANTIGONE.

ŒDIPUS.

O, I am all alone !

CREON.

Aye, roam alone, without thy guiding staff :
 Alone oppose thy country's friends, and thine.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Thou shalt not depart !

CREON.

Retire ; and touch me not !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Restore the maidens ; or thou shalt not go !

CREON.

A prize more worth than them, shall next be mine.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Another lawless outrage !

CREON.

The man shall go.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Thy words are daring.

CREON.

So shall be the deed ;
If unopposed by him who rules your land.

ŒDIPUS.

O shameless wretch ! wilt thou assail *me* also ?

CREON.

Peace, I command thee !

ŒDIPUS.

Give me, dread Goddesses,
A potent voice to curse this profligate,
Who thus hath left me dark and desolate !
Oh, may all-seeing Helios, blast thee
And all thy race, with blind old age, like mine !

CREON.

Hear ye him ; dwellers of the land ?

ŒDIPUS.

They hear,
And see both thee and me : and this it is
That daunts thee.

CREON.

I can forbear no more ! Thus then ;
Though old, I seize, and thus will drag thee hence !

ANTISTROPHE.

ŒDIPUS.

O misery !

CHORUS.

Thou daring and shameless man ! thinkest thou
Thus to achieve this deed ?

CREON.

I do !

CHORUS.

Thus controll'd ; our's is no more a State !

CREON.

The weak, when just, are strong.

ŒDIPUS.

His pleas are threats !

CHORUS.

Threats will not avail : our aid is Jove.

CREON.

And Jove is also mine !

CHORUS.

We are insulted !

CREON.

And must endure it.

CHORUS.

Ye people arise ! Patricians, to arms !

Here we demand your aid ! hasten, obey our call !

Our land is assailed !

Enter THESEUS attended.

THESEUS.

What affray demands my presence ?

Say, what danger prompts your cries,—

Draws me thus from the holy temple

Where the Sea-god's victims bleed ?

ŒDIPUS.

O generous friend !—for by thy voice I know thee,—

He whom thou seest, Creon, hath by force

Reft me of both my comforters—my daughters !

THESEUS.

The guards that wait upon our sacrifice,—

Both horse and foot, despatch to the narrow strait,

Which they who bear the virgins hence, must pass

Ere they escape ; and make us thus the scorn

Of both assailers and assailed—speed, speed !—

*Exeunt Attendants.*Creon, thou hast insulted me ; disgraced thyself,
Thy kin, and country. This is a land, whose laws

On justice founded, thou hast dared to break ;—
 Hast treated us, their guardians and avengers,
 As weak and abject cowards ; making ourself,
 A potentate in nothing but the name.
 Mark me ! Restore the maidens safely ; or
 Thou shalt not quit this land ! so look to it.

CREON.

Doubting the power and wisdom of your State,
 O son of *Ægeus*, ne'er induced this act :
 I did it, thinking you would not attempt
 To hold my kindred when I urged my claim.
 For who could dream that you would shield a man
 Stained with his father's blood ? and worse,—by incest ?

CEDIPUS.

Seest thou not, O shameless man ! reproaches hurled
 At me and mine ; apply to thee ? why thus
 Upbraid me for doing guilt unconsciously ?
 Let one thou ne'er hadst known, attempt thy life ;
 Wouldst thou not strike, repelling force by force ?
 Or, wouldst thou rather tamely yield thyself
 A victim to his unprovoked assault ?
 Cease to reproach me then for what I did,
 Impelled by dire Necessity's decree.
 For could my father from the shades arise,
 He would confirm the justice of my plea.
 But thou, unjustly urged by splenic pride,
 Hast uttered in this presence, words—which if true,
 Most shame thyself, and vainly slander me.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

The stranger merits sympathy, O king !
 His woes deserve alleviating aid.

THESEUS.

No more ! while we debate, our spoilers fly !
 (*To Creon.*) Guide me to where the maidens yet may be :
 Or, borne towards your land, we need not follow ;

For our troops, by intercepting, will not let them
Escape, and with impunity exult. Lead on !
Here **Œ**dipus, remain : and be assured ;
I'll find, and bring thy daughters back—or die !

ŒDIPUS.

Ye Gods, bless Theseus for his generous aid !
Exeunt THESEUS, CREON and Attendants.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Ah, were I on yonder plain,
Where now our undaunted sons
Stand arm'd for the hostile fray !
There, where the shrine of Phœbus gleams,
And torches are burning ;
Where mortals bow down to the venerated pair,
Whose awful rites are mystic deeds
Wrought by Eumolpiden priests, and never breath'd to
mortal ear.
There, glowing with ardour,
Panting to rush against the foe ;
See, see all our legions
With great Theseus ; sword in hand, they cry,—
Rescue the sisters !

ANTISTROPHE I.

Or, westward, perchance they rush,
Where snow-cover'd mountains rise
O'er **Œ**a's enamelled meads :
There, dancing cars and prancing steeds
Will clash in the onset !
There, on the foe, soon will impending vengeance fall :
For Theseus leads our valiant sons :
See their arms and armour gleaming, bright as the
trappings their coursers wear !
Now proudly exulting,
They who honour equestrian Minerva,

And great Rhea's son, ocean's earth-encircling king,
Press to the battle !

STROPHE 2.

Do they await, pursue, or fight ?
My heart thrills with hope
That they will soon rescue
The captive maid, who hath endured,
And still endures her kindred's woes.
This day, this day, Jove will restore her,—
Crown our heroes' deeds with glory !
Like a dove, high soaring, sped along by the storm-wind
I, from the verge of a cloud,
Would look down on the contest ;
And see my country's arms triumphant !

ANTISTROPHE 2.

Dread Power, that fillest heaven's high throne,
O, all-seeing Jove,
Defend our great Ruler !
On him the victor's palm bestow ;
With verdant laurels deck his brow !
We call on thee, Pallas Athene !
Mighty hunter Phœbus, hear us ;
And thy sister of the chase, whose dart unerring,
Pierceth the far-distant Hart :
O come, defend our guardians ;
We pray ye, aid our native heroes !

Second Part.

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Stranger, my words prophetic are confirmed ;
For speeding hither, I behold your daughters !

OEDIPUS.

Where are they, where ?—what sayest thou ?

Enter THESEUS, ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

ANTIGONE.

Dearest father !

O that the Gods would give thee eyes to see
This best of men, who brings us back to thee !

OEDIPUS.

My children ! are ye both safe ?

ANTIGONE.

Both ; to Theseus
And his brave comrades, thanks !

OEDIPUS.

Again I clasp ye !
Now were I to die, I should not feel unhappy !
Say briefly, what hath befallen.

ANTIGONE.

Theseus

Will speak for us, and make our answer brief.

THESEUS.

Your daughters here are safe. Let them narrate
The tale some other time : for a matter now,
Though trivial, claims your attention.
A stranger—not from Thebes, yet your kinsman,
Is now a suppliant at Neptune's altar.

ŒDIPUS.

For what ? such supplicating seems momentous.

THESEUS.

He comes to seek an audience here of you ;
And a safe dismission hence.

ŒDIPUS.

Who can he be ?

THESEUS.

Might one—a relative, from Argos come ?

ŒDIPUS.

Ha ! say no more, my friend !

THESEUS.

What moves you thus ?

ŒDIPUS.

'Tis my ungrateful son ; the man whose words
Of all mankind's, would pain me most to hear.

THESEUS.

Why so ? to hear, is not to grant a suit :
Be not averse to listen.

ŒDIPUS.

His hated voice,

O king, would rack my heart : urge me no more !

THESEUS.

He prays beside our altar, to be heard :
Can we, revering heaven, reject his prayer ?

ANTIGONE.

Though I am young ; let me advise you, father !
Theseus entreats, in duty to the Gods,
That you will not refuse what he approves,—
An audience to my brother : let him come !
You are his father ; and though deeply wronged,
Yet, like a God, return him good for evil !
How many angry sires, of erring sons,
Charmed by the voice of nature, have relented ?

Methinks, reflecting on the evils—your's
 By heritage, should turn revenge to mercy.
 And what, alas ! are now your sightless orbs,
 But proofs of passion's impulse ? be advised !
 In justice to yourself, be just ; and grant
 The king's request, whose pity granted your's !

OEDIPUS.

Although reluctantly, my child ; I yield :
 To pleasure you, let him approach. I trust
 That Theseus will continue my protector ?

THESEUS.

What I have promised, need I say again ?
 Aided by heaven, old man, I will protect you !

Exit THESEUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

When the health and the strength are gone,
 He that still would be lingering here,
 Borne down by a load of care ;
 Is—I consider, devoid of wisdom.
 Old age bringeth disease and pain ;
 Anguish, grief, and regret remain.
 For youth's bloom and its fleeting joys,
 Never, never return again !
 Life's varied pathways lead to death ;
 All its mazes—smooth or rugged ;
 Even its wishes
 End in Hades ! Love led by Hymen,
 Revels, dances, strains of music,
 Cease, when the Foe appeareth !

ANTISTROPHE.

Not to be, is the best blessing :
 Or, in early childhood to die,
 And escape all the cares and pains,
 They, living longest, endure the longest.

Youth, and Folly, and Sorrow roam
 Hand in hand to their destined home :
 For who liveth devoid of care ?
 Who escapeth what all must bear ?
 Envy, Sedition, Murder, Strife,
 Fear, and Rage, hover around us :
 And, in conclusion ;
 Feeble, helpless, old, and friendless ;
 All these ills together falling,
 Crush their devoted victim.

EPODE.

On thee, poor mourner ; all these evils fall,—
 Fall as the billows rushing beat the north-strand,
 Dashing onward urged by the blast of winter.
 Thus, tempests of affliction
 Never ending, assail us :
 Thus, lowering sorrows around us gather ;
 Whether from Helios' western bound ;
 Or, from his eastern gate ;
 Or, where his rays beam brightest ;
 Or, down from the home of Arcturus.

Enter POLYNICES.

ANTIGONE.

The suppliant comes, my father, all alone :
 Here, weeping Polynices stands before you.

POLYNICES.

Woe ! sisters ; shall I first begin by mourning
 My own misfortunes, or my aged father's ?
 Alas ! that I should find—him, once a king,
 Without a cover for his hoary head !—
 Wretch that I am ! I brought him to this pass !
 Ah ; do not frown, my father ; do not say—
 My aid, though late, now comes too late to aid thee !
 What ! not one word ?

O speak, my father ! do not turn away ;
 Send me not hence from thee with mute contempt ;
 But tell me why thou art implacable !
 Plead, plead my sisters ; plead for me, I pray !

ANTIGONE.

Nay, hapless brother, speak : inspired by grief,
 Words rarely fail to draw responding words.

POLYNICES.

Thus well advised, I will : imploring first
 The God from whose altar Theseus raised me up,
 Pledging his word to guard me here and hence.
 And this I beg from you—and you—and him
 To whom I come an exile and a suitor.
 Driven from the throne pre-birth makes mine, by base
 Eteocles, who now by craft usurps it ;
 For aid I fled to Argos ; where its king
 Adrastus, makes himself my close ally
 By giving me his daughter ; and to regain
 My rightful claim, he now enlists seven bands ;
 Their leaders, Apian chiefs—and me, against Thebes.
 I, for myself and them, implore thee ; come,
 And crown our efforts to avenge my wrongs !—
 For where thou art, the Oracles declare
 There Victory will be. By Thebes' streams
 And all her Gods ; relent,—return with me !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Say what is needful : speak for Theseus' sake !

ŒDIPUS.

And but that Theseus deems it just I should ;
 The wretch had never heard my voice again :
 That now replies only to blight his hopes.
 Didst thou not, vile one, when thou wast enthroned
 Where now thy brother sways, drive out thy father ?—
 Doom him to wander clad in filthy rags,
 The object now that even makes thee weep—

Though that is rather for *thyself* than *me*.
 I have no tears ; yet must I live to bear
 The rankling barb of his ingratitude,
 Who cast me forth to beg my daily bread.
 Go, basest of the vile, chased by despair !
 Thy spear shall not avail thee ; nor again
 Shalt thou revisit Argos. Die ! die ! die,—
 Thou and thy throne-usurping brother,—foes !
 Hence ! with my imprecations, I invoke
 Dark Erebus the sire of Tartarus,
 To plunge you both within his blackest gulf :
 And may these Goddesses, with mighty Ares,—
 Who raised this strife between you, seal your doom !
 Go ; tell the Thebans, tell thy Argive friends ;
 Thus Oedipus hath cursed thee !

POLYNICES.

Woe is mine !

Woe for my coming, woe for my ill success,
 And woe, alas, for all my Argive friends !
 O sisters ! when my father's dreadful curse
 Hath stricken me ; if you return to Thebes ;
 By all the Gods, I pray you will entomb
 My wretched corse with due and pious rites !
 So shall the praise of duty for a father,
 By duty for a brother be redoubled.

ANTIGONE.

O dearest brother ; heed thy sister's prayer !
 Waste not thy country, nor destroy thyself ;
 Withdraw thy armed hosts again to Argos !

POLYNICES.

Wouldst have me live dishonoured, and a coward ?

ANTIGONE.

To lose thee thus, will double all my griefs !

POLYNICES.

What Fate ordains, must be. O may the Gods
 Guard you from evil ! for you never yet
 Deserved to live unhappy. Fare ye well !

Exit POLYNICES.

STROPHE 1.

CHORUS.

The blind man, on our heads hath drawn
 A dreadful disaster, strange to us all,
 Should his fate avert not the blow :
 For I have never known the just God's doom on mortals
 vainly fall.
 We, soon or late, must behold
 In the future, all the past foretold :
 Time advanceth laden with griefs. (*Thunder.*)
 Hark ! distant thunder ! Help Jove !

ŒDIPUS.

Will any here, my children, speed for Theseus ?

ANTIGONE.

Why is his presence needed ?

ŒDIPUS.

Jove's thunder peal
 Will lead me soon to Hades. (*Thunder.*)
 Send for the king !

ANTISTROPHE 1.

CHORUS.

From Jove's hand it is darted—hark !
 Again ! louder now the dread peals resound.
 Struck with terror, stark stands my hair !
 I thrill with horror ! see the flashes hurl'd around ! again,
 again !
 What dire event is impending ? Fear appals me ! not in
 vain
 Come flash after flash, and peal after peal.
 Voice of a God—Jove, save us !

CÆDIPUS.

My awful moment comes, foretold by Fate ;
 It cannot be eluded !

ANTIGONE.

How know you this ?

CÆDIPUS.

By prescient knowledge. (Thunder.)
 Hasten Theseus hither !

STROPHE 2.

CHORUS.

Behold !

Behold ! see the vivid cloud-rending fires
 Descend to the earth !
 Mercy, O Jove ! be thou gracious while thy dread veil
 Of night-gloom impends, and shakes our native land !
 If he be good ; save him, we pray ! but if unholy, strike
 him down !

Alone let him fall ; on him hurl the blow !
 Oh, hear, mighty Jove !

CÆDIPUS.

Will the king come before my Spirit goeth ?

ANTIGONE.

What matter hast thou for him ?

CÆDIPUS.

The consummation :
 My thanks and promised blessing for his aid.

ANTISTROPHE 2.

CHORUS.

O come !

O come ! haste, O haste ; no longer delay !
 Though on the rocky strand
 Thou bowest before the sea's mighty God,
 While now on his shrine the victims consume.

To thee, thy State, and friends, the man would give his
benison and thanks :
Grateful for all your favours crown'd with saving aid.
Haste hither, haste, monarch !

Enter THESEUS.

THESEUS.

Wherefore again these loud and fearful cries,—
Your's and the stranger's ?

ŒDIPUS.

My end, O king, is near ! let me fulfil the promise
I gave thy State and thee : then welcome Death !

THESEUS.

What signs convince thee that thy hour is come ?

ŒDIPUS.

Resistless Jove's incessant peals and flashes.

THESEUS.

Thy words confirm'd assure me. What shall be done ?

ŒDIPUS.

A deed to shed unfading glory on
Thy State and thee, O son of Ægeus ! in proof ;
I will unguided, show thee where I die :
And dying, aid thee more than alien hosts
Of shields and spears. The sacred mystery
Forbids that I should utter it : nor would I
To thine and mine,—although so dear to me :
Thyself alone shall see it, to reveal
To thy successor at thine hour of death.
This do ; and Athens shall never yield to Thebes.
Remember,—
Whenever States, neglecting righteous laws,
Grow lax in virtue, and corruptly swerve
From good to evil ; they decline : for soon
Or late, the Gods avenge impiety.
Impress this, Theseus, on your subjects' hearts :
That their's may be the counterpart of thine.

Now to the bourne, where led by heavenly Power,
 Unawed, although with reverence, I go !
 Follow me, children ! hence, your father leads
 As you have led him :—touch me not ! for I
 Behold instinctively the way to Death.
 There, on his precincts, do the cleansing rites ;
 Array me for my shrine ; and then—we part.
 This way—this way ! the death-guide Hermes, and
 The Goddess of the shades, direct me hence.
 O radiant beam !—to me no longer Light ;
 Exchange the parting touch with these poor limbs
 Now quitting thee for Hades ! Dearest of friends,
 Blessing thy subjects and thyself, I go.
 Prosper, be happy, and remember Oedipus !

*Exeunt OEDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE
 and Attendants.*

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

If I may call on thee, night-veiled Goddess ; and
 Also on thee, Stern Ruler,
 King of the shadow-world ;
 Aidoneus, Aidoneus, heed my prayer !
 Soothe the poor wanderer's dying pains ;
 Let not his Spirit pine
 While passing over the Stygian tide ;
 But gently convey him to thy dark home !
 Unnumbered sorrows for deeds blindly wrought in life,
 were thine :
 May all the Gods now reward and bless thee !

ANTISTROPHE.

Ye hidden Goddesses dwelling below the earth !
 Guard of the footworn threshold,
 Cerberus, hell's grim dog ;
 Crouching there, howling now, keeping watch :
 We call on thee, thou all-conquering

Guard of the spirit-realm !
 Death, Gæa's offspring by Tartarus ;
 We pray thee in mercy, gently meet,
 And guide the stranger approaching thy drear and
 dreaded plains !
 O heed our prayer, thou that never sleepest !

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Citizens ; the blind old man is dead !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Say, was his death-stroke heavenly and painless ?

MESSENGER.

"Twas wonderful as was his going hence,—
 Seeing, though eyeless : thus he gained the threshold
 Where the steep brazen steps descending, lead
 To where Pirithous and Theseus parted.
 There, loosing his tatter'd garments, he bade his daughters
 Bring lavements and libations from the stream :
 Which being done, and all the rites performed ;
 The Thunderer shook the earth. Trembling and weeping,
 The virgins clasped their parent, who exclaimed :—
 " My daughters ; you no longer have a father
 " To toil for and sustain : henceforth be happy !"
 While thus they clung together mutely weeping,
 A voice terrific and appalling, sprang
 From the earth : " Ho, Oedipus ! why, Oedipus, dost thou
 Delay ? why linger ? why so tardy ? come !"
 Then beckoning Theseus to his side ; he said,—
 " Beloved friend, to your protection I
 Consign my daughters." The generous monarch vow'd
 To guard and guide them with parental care.
 " Now children, go ;" the old man said ; " for none
 " But Theseus may behold my death."
 We led the sobbing maidens from the scene ;

And at a little distance, turned to take
 A parting glance—when lo ! the king alone
 Remained ; his hands close pressed upon his brow,
 Prostrated and adoring : *O*edipus was gone !

CHORUS SPEAKER.

Where are his daughters, and the friends who led them ?

MESSENGER.

Those cries of anguish herald their approach.

Enter ANTIGONE, ISMENE and Attendants.

STROPHE 1.

ANTIGONE.

Woe ! woe ! not alone misfortune,
 Our's by fatality—our's by inheritance ;
 We of the curse-bladen race of Labdacus,
 Lonely and sorrowful
 Still must endure ! for another calamity
 Comes to embitter and double the misery
 We suffered with our father !

CHORUS.

What is it ?

ANTIGONE.

A grief too deep for words to reach !

CHORUS.

How went he ?

ANTIGONE.

As ye might desire he should depart :—
 Not by the stroke of war ;
 Nor did ocean's waves engulf him ;
 Earth mysteriously expanding,
 Suddenly open'd beneath him ; and he was gone !

O sister, we are desolate !
 Dark misfortunes gather round us :
 We in foreign lands must wander ;
 Or stem the ocean, seeking rest ! Where shall we turn
 For shelter ? where, for daily bread ?

STROPHE 2.

ISMENE.

Ah, I know not where ! stern Hades,
 Ruthless Hades, take me hence !—hence where now
 my father
 Awaits me ! for I see before me nothing worth existence !

CHORUS.

O ye beloved,—best of children !
 Learn to bear what heaven assigns ;
 Meekly endure your sorrows : here, grief is the lot of
 mortals.

ANTISTROPHE 1.

ANTIGONE.

A gleam of joy allay'd my sorrows :
 I found consolation while soothing his miseries ;
 It cheer'd my heart to press him on my bosom !
 Father, still dear to me ;
 Though in the cheerless grave, living in memory :
 Age and thy bitter woes ripen'd my love for thee ;
 And death now makes it stronger !

CHORUS.

He ended—

ANTIGONE.

He ended life as he desired.

CHORUS.

Explain it.

ANTIGONE.

He desired to die, where he has died;
 And rest, where now he lies entombed.
 He has died not unlamented :—
 Witness these tears that gush from mine eyes,
 And ever will, while I have life,
 Flow for him, though unavailing :
 Time will never heal my grief. Oh !
 Why wast thou fated thus to die without a home,
 And leave thy daughters desolate ?

ANTISTROPHE 2.

ISMENE.

Yes, my sister, we are wretched !
 Misfortune clings to thee and me ! Fatherless we must
 wander !

CHORUS.

Cease to regret your sire, O maidens !
 His was not a hapless end :—
 Cease, for bereavement is an ill common to every mortal.

STROPHE 2.

ANTIGONE.

Let us return, Ismene !

ISMENE.

Where,—and what to do ?

ANTIGONE.

I would behold the—

ISMENE.

Say ?

ANTIGONE.

The lone sepulchre where he lies—

ISMENE.

Our father's ?

ANTIGONE.

Yes ; our father's tomb.

ISMENE.

Can this desire be lawful ? think !
He is gone,—

ANTIGONE.

Where I would now go.

ISMENE.

Wherfore ? tell me !

ANTIGONE.

Why restrain me ?

ISMENE.

Where he is, he hath no death-shrine.

ANTIGONE.

Follow me ; and see me die there !

ISMENE.

Wouldst thou leave thy sister lonely ?
It would make me still more wretched,
Thus to endure existence !

ANTISTROPHE 3.

CHORUS.

Fear not ; beloved maidens !

ANTIGONE.

Ah ! where shall I turn ?

CHORUS.

O turn from sorrow !

ANTIGONE.

Where ?

CHORUS.

Securely here you may remain.

ANTIGONE.

I think—

CHORUS.

What can you more desire ?

ANTIGONE.

I would return to my native land.
Were I but there !

CHORUS.

O go not thither !

ANTIGONE.

Need impels us.

CHORUS.

Shun the danger !

ANTIGONE.

Fatal discord there is raging !

CHORUS.

Go not ; lest its waves engulf you !

ANTIGONE.

Mighty Jove ! In what direction—
Where is Hope ? if Hope be extant ;
Shall we ever more behold it ?

Enter THESEUS attended.

THESEUS.

O maidens, forbear ; no longer lament !
To mourn for the dead who repose in the tomb ;
Is vain as unwise.

ANTIGONE.

Theseus ; we kneel to thee !

THESEUS.

What boon to entreat ?

ANTIGONE.

That we may behold
Where our father is laid.

THESEUS.

It cannot be granted :
Your father commanded me never to show it.
And on my obedience, the glory of Athens
Dependeth.

ANTIGONE.

We bow with submission.
But may we entreat you will send us to Thebes ;
That we may there temper the rage of our brothers ?

THESEUS.

That pious request may with justice be yielded.

CHORUS.

Let resignation allay your grief ;
Your sorrow is vain :
The will of heaven is sacred.

THE END.

